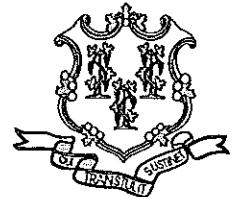




STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Public Hearing Testimony
Human Services Committee
March 4, 2014



Proposed H.B. No. 5135 AN ACT PREVENTING THE CLOSURE OR RELOCATION OF CHILD WELFARE OFFICES IN HIGH NEED AREAS.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) offers the following comments regarding Proposed H.B. No. 5135, An Act Preventing the Closure or Relocation of Child Welfare Offices in High Need Areas.

DCF currently leases office space in 16 locations. These include our 15 area offices where we provide direct services for clients and one satellite office that houses certain DCF Central Office functions. The number of cities and towns served by a particular office ranges from one or two (New Haven and Meriden) to twenty-three (Torrington). Below is a listing of these leased office locations:

- 100 Fairfield Avenue, Bridgeport
- 131 West Street, Danbury
- 250 Hamilton Street, Hartford
- 364 West Middle Turnpike, Manchester
- One West Main Street, Meriden
- 2081 South Main Street, Middletown
- 38 Wellington Road, Milford
- One Grove Street, New Britain
- One Long Wharf Drive, New Haven
- 149 Water Street, 2nd Floor, Norwalk
- Two Courthouse Square, Norwich
- 401 Shippam Avenue, Suite 2, Stamford
- 62 Commercial Boulevard, Torrington
- 395 West Main Street, Waterbury
- 322 Main Street, Willimantic
- 55 West Main Street, Meriden (Central Office Satellite)

Most of these offices have leases with five year terms, although many have renewal options. In any given year, DCF asks the Department of Administrative Services to initiate lease proposals for two or three of our offices based on expiring leases or changing space needs. We request that the offices meet our space needs, parking and security requirements and require that the premises be accessible to individuals with disabilities and public transportation. It is DAS' responsibility to solicit leasing proposals and finalize the terms of any lease agreements with landlords.

While we can appreciate the intent of this legislation to encourage the siting of DCF offices in the communities with the highest concentration of cases in a given services area, there are also geographic considerations that should be taken into account. We are also concerned that enacting legislation that may limit the number lease proposals submitted to DAS will make it more difficult for the state to competitively procure real estate and possibly increase leasing expenses.

H.B. No. 5323 AN ACT CONCERNING THE CHILD POVERTY AND PREVENTION COUNCIL

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) supports H.B. No. 5323, An Act Concerning the Child Poverty and Prevention Council (CPPC). This bill adds three new members, the Commissioners of Housing and Agriculture and the Executive Director of the Office of Early Childhood, to the council and consolidates duplicative reporting requirements.

Biennially, every agency that provides prevention services to children, youths, and families has to provide to the Office of Policy and Management: (1) a list of agency and programs that provide prevention services; (2) the actual prevention services expenditures for the fiscal year preceding the biennium, by program; and (3) the estimated prevention services expenditures for the first fiscal year of the biennium. This information is then used to create a prevention report that is produced simultaneously with the Governor's biennial budget. The provision of this information, especially during the development of a two-year budget, is administratively burdensome to our department, and duplicative of similar reporting requirements that we perform through the CPPC. This bill streamlines the requirements of the Prevention Report and the CPPC report, which will eliminate duplicative and unnecessary reporting requirements, and allow DCF to direct staff time toward work that directly benefits Connecticut children and families.
